# VILLAGE REPUBLICS

## ( A Retrospect & A Scheme )

BY

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# FOREWORD

To say that the village should form the base of Swaraj has become a truism. To describe Indian Nationalism as a pyramidal structure broadbased upon the vast foundation of the six and half lakhs of villages in Hindusthan is only a variant of the first thought. What does such a demand mean? The village is not a mass of bricks and mortar, anymore than the pyramid is a structure of stone and cement. The village would be a miniature cosmos in which the people live as brothers, finding their own food and raiment, building their own houses and arranging their own Education and Treatment. They must cultivate land, spin and weave, toil and moil with the Joint Family as a Labour union and the village community as a Co-operative Society. Their's would be the duty of working out a scheme of Socialism achieved through love and brotherhood, through Truth and non-violence, through peaceful and legitimate means. So far then only the theory of the State is delineated and it is for the India of the future to work it out in practice. The author has attempted this mighty task. His is not the condescending preaching of a well-to-do aristocract of intellect and wealth. He lives the life he preaches. His Indian village is only himself writ large. Personal experience enables a writer to write not only with lucidity but with authority. When therefore the author deals with a Village Republic he deals with it not only as a serious student of the subject but also as a strenuous citizen of the Republic.

The very first step then in such an attempt is to offer a course of studies in the original plan of our village system, the **Dharma** on which it was based, the group formations in Society to perform particular common duties, the **Vidhis** and the **nishedhams** involved in such an arrangement, the elimination of competition and the balancing of the groups in Society,—not on the basis of power, but of service and the great reconciliation of Rights and Duties. This voluntary adjustment which created status and eliminated contract from Society could not endure under the onslaughts of foreign invasion and an

adulteration of principles and policies has been the inevitable result, causing a rude shock and shake in the established order and the accepted canons of individual morality, social integrity and national probity. Courts, Colleges and Councils have been the media through which denationalization has spread far and wide and their re-examination forms the starting point of a National renaissance. A time has therefore come for a co-ordination of ancient institution with modern demands, and we must study how best we can reorganize our commerce with Labour as our wealth and our exchange with Barter as our currency, how best we can substitute the spirit of service for the craving for authority and restore the self-sufficiency of the village in place of the village as the milchcow of cities and towns. Production and distribution require to be reorganized, pasture land and forests have to be communalized equally with canals and tanks, bunds and water sources. Conceptions of Law and Order have to be revised, woman has to be restored to her place of pre-eminence in society, land and key industries have to be nationalized or brought under social control and world's security must be promoted by eliminating competition and covetousness, by promoting self-sufficiency in food and raiment for each nation and by making wars more harmful to the victor than to the vanquished.

Swaraj means not merely **Raj** but also **swa-raj**, wherein **swa-bhav** and **swa-rup** will figure prominently and realize themselves through social laws and civic institutions. The task of the future is an arduous one. Those that will be called upon to face it are people trained under a condemned system and Governments run by them would be at best like trains composed of new Engines and old Bogies. The Engines too may not be new for some time to come but only factory-rebuilts and therefore their output of work would necessarily be below par. Considerable effort should be made therefore to "educate our masters" and the author's attempt in this direction is not only the first in order, but will also be easily the first in merit.

Machilipatnam,
23-3-1946.

**B. Pattabhi Sitaramayya.**

AUTHOR

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# AUTHOR'S NOTE

The subject matter of this publication was evolved by me during the course of my lectures delivered in 1934-35 to the students of the 'Village Reconstruction' section of the **Andhra-Jatheeya-Kalasala**, Masulipatam, Madras Presidency. The theoretical portion comprising the first three chapters of this book was first published in Telugu in 1937 by the **Kalasala** and later in 1942, the scheme portion was published by me again in Telugu as one of the series of '**Grama Swarajya Grandhamala**'

Some portions were translated into English and published in the weekly **'Village Republics'** in 1941.

Friends having advised me that the theory and the scheme deserve wider publication in a permanent book form in English throughout India, I have now ventured to present my case before this wider audience.

Some who studied my scheme in Telugu, have asked me if I had copied it from Russia. My reply was, "please don't insult my intelligence or that of my ancients. I have not read a bit of any Russian stuff. I need not travel far to Russia to re-enunciate a principle of communal ownership of property — one only of the five fundamental principles on which my scheme is based." It is indigenous, ancient; and the village organisation based on it was, even in the words of an English Bishop, 'so ancient and firmly established that it may be regarded as the most permanent institution in India.'

I do not know,—never cared to know — nor need I know for the purpose on hand—what really is happening in Russia. Only I am told that the Russian method is based on violence and treachery. But my scheme eschews all that and it is based on non-violence, mutual love, co-operation and spirit of service. Friends, while admiring the scheme as un-exceptional, ask me as to how it could be brought to materialise. My answer is firstly ~~endure under the onslaughts of foreign invasions and an~~

by propaganda and secondly by **adopting it openly as an election programme** by any party (primarily the Congress). If the voters 'with open eyes' return the party which stands upon this ticket, nothing stands in its way to legislate openly upon the lines of this scheme and usher in the new social order envisaged in it. This is the only non-violent method available to us. We need not break the heads of rich men to bring about this revolution. I am sure that if the scheme is properly explained, even the rich will fall in line with it. They will have nothing to lose except their worry in guarding their riches with sleepless nights in a "**dog in the manger**" fashion. The only possible section that may object to the scheme is that section which only wants to be idle and yet demands food. He must be a bold man who would say, "I don't work, give me food." Even if there are any such people now, their numbers will dwindle in no time into insignificance and the road will be free for the ushering in of the new era.

Possibly the second point upon which my scheme differs from the Russian methods is my insistence upon de-centralisation of power, wealth, means of production etc., as also the insistence on handcrafts and cottage industries as opposed to machinery. In my opinion, machinery beyond a very very restricted limit is the symbol of violence, and a potent source for fomenting world wars. It must be eschewed as far as possible, no doubt, where absolutely necessary, keeping it under strict control for the production of certain only of our commodities and for acting as handmaids to the Village-cottage industries. Its place is determined in the scheme under section XVI.

Vurutur Village,
Pamarru P. O., Kistna Dt.
9-9-1945.

**M. Satyanarayana Sastri.**

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# VILLAGE REPUBLICS

## A Retrospect and A Scheme

### CHAPTER 1

### ORIGINAL PLAN OF THE VILLAGE

The unit of our society has been the village. When we take up the question of examining the structure of our village, it means we are examining the structure of our society itself. The two words 'Village' and 'Society' connote, in my opinion, one and the same idea.

Let us try to understand how the structure of our society had been evolved ever since the beginning of time. In the creation of God, we meet with two kinds of animals. Some would like to live singly, and alone, for example, the tiger and the lion. They live singly in their lonely dens. They have never been known to roam about in groups. Some other animals such as wolves, sheep, deer etc., live together and go about always in herds. They have what is called the "herd-instinct" in them. Man belongs to the second category of animals, having what I have termed the herd-instinct.

This instinct promotes the desire for mutual help and co-operation amongst its herd and supplies the motive for its perpetuation and preservation. This instinct in man is so strong that he devised all possible ways and means imaginable to see that the herd did not break away under any sort of stress or distress either external or internal. These ways and means that are intended to bind the herd together without falling into pieces are called Dharmas. The word 'dharma' is derived from the sanskrit root 'dhri'-'dharana'- that which holds (things) together. When applied to human society, it denotes "that which holds human beings together."

The 'dharmas' which hold the human society well-knit together were changing from time to time to suit the changing circumstances. They were not devised once and for all for eternity. Our ancesters were not fools to say that 'dharma' or rule of human conduct in matters social onc

made should never be altered even by a bit. If it were so, the Hindu society would have become disrupted long ago. Change is the very attribute of Nature and human society and human laws are no exception to this. Our so-called 'sanatanists' do not seem to have recognised this fundamental attribute of Nature when they say that the old social regulations or customs such as prohibition of re-marriage for widows, and temple entry to Harijans and a host of other things should not now be altered or abrogated. They would stick on to the old rotten things I mean rotten by passage of time and would rather prefer breaking or disrupting the Hindu society, to adjusting it to the needs of the times. In all matters, time is a very important and fundamental factor, which the Sanatanists would ignore altogether. A close study of our social evolution would reveal that our ancients, assembled in what were called 'dharmagna samayas' (Assemblies or Conventions of knowners of dharmas) were engaged from time to time in amending our social laws in order that our society may live and not die.

Now with the advent of the foreign rule, those days had gone; we lost the power and the courage to legislate independently on our own social matters. We are afraid even to change a comma, or a full-stop in the ancient scriptures; and we have come to think that we have no right to amend the social Laws to suit the present day needs. This sort of atrophied state of mind is a sure sign of decay. We must take courage now by both the hands and with a disinterested and pure motive of social welfare, begin to legislate afresh and bring forth now 'smritis' to regulate our society.

Now, taking up the thread of evolution, let us see how, in the beginning of things, our society started.

Man, being an animal with herd instinct, he started with a group. Himself, his family, children and cattle formed the first group. These groups roamed about in search of food and fodder and had no fixed settlements. This was the first nomadic state. This phase of human evolution is still preserved in certain nomadic tribes, called 'Lambadies' and 'Erukulas' in the Telugu parts.

These tribes, after wandering about for some time, thought it best to settle down in some convenient place, where they were assured of adequate supply of food and fodder. Such were generally the places by the side of big rivers which in course of time became densely populated and later on developed into seats of learning, centres of commerce, citadels of big Empires and places of piligrimage.

When once they gave up roaming about and settled in convenient plots, how did they behave and manage to preserve their herd? Let us see. Suppose one hundred human beings squatted in one place and wanted to live there permanently and happily. Their first and foremost requirements would, we may easily imagine, be food and raiment. Other wants, of course, follow next. To arrange for the supply of these things, there must be a plan. The work must be divided and distributed amongst the members themselves. They were divided into groups — some small groups, others big groups according to the needs of the work to be done and each group was assigned some work. Here came in two difficulties.

First: What works are to be attended to by individual members themselves? and what works are to be entrusted to groups? For example, with regard to the question of cooking of food — should every-body cook his own food separately or should there be a common kitchen for all the hundred members and a group of members told off to do cooking? With regard to this cooking affair alone, we see a variety of arrangements now existing, with those that are called 'Swahastapakis' (i. e.) those who cook their own food and do not eat food cooked by others, at one end, and the common kitchen for the whole village or town, as in Russia at the other end. There are those who do not attend even to their own personal cleanliness, but would engage others, say to wash their hands and feet, to untie their boots and suits or even to wash their hands with which they ate food. This latter practice is to be seen among the Royal-Velama families of Andhra Desa, possibly in other parts also.

Similarly, with regard to the washing of the cloths. Should every man or woman wash his or her own clothes, or should the

clothes of all men and women in the village be washed by a group of persons specially told off for that business? Should every man have self-shave or should all the chins and heads of all men in the village be shaved by a gang of 2 or 3 men specially told off for that business? Should every man weave his own cloth himself or should all the clothing required by all the villagers be woven by a separate gang specially engaged for the purpose. 'Examples may be multiplied' the solution of the question depends upon as to what is the best way of conserving and utilising to the best advantage the energy and the time of the men living in the colony or village. Here comes in the need for intelligent planning. Men's energies should not be wasted nor fritted away unnecessarily by un-intelligent or foolish planning If a particular work could be done more economically by assigning it to a group of men (big or small) specially told off for that work, than by every man trying to do it himself, by all means, do make that arrangement and release that individual for some other more useful work.

Now, if we closely examine the plan of our village, we see that our ancients considered that the works connected with washing of cloths, shaving, weaving, making of pots, raising of food stuffs etc., could better be entrusted to groups than be allowed to be done by each individual separately. The works connected with spinning, cooking of food, attending to cleanliness of the body etc., were thought to be better done by the individuals themselves than by being entrusted to separate groups or gangs. That is why spinning has become universalised and not confined to any group of persons. There is no spinning caste. There is weaving caste.

The works which were entrusted to groups, instead of to individuals were called 'vrittis', and thus we see in the village, the washerman vritti, Barber vritti, Weaver vritti, Potter vritti etc., etc. 'Vritti' is that, that gives food to the group told off to that particular work. In one word, 'vritti' is that, that gives you 'bhukti'. It is 'Pranadharana'.

(The word 'vritti' is derived from the same sanskrit root as 'varta'. 'Varta' does not mean 'news'—as is generally mistaken. It means the economies of life.)

If you wash your own clothes, you do not become a washerman. The mother removes the stools of her child, she does not thereby become a scavenger. But if you do these things for others and thereby earn your daily bread, then, that becomes your 'vritti'.

These groupings and these 'vrittis' might have undergone several changes or alterations from time to time. But still, as time advances, we may have to make further changes or adjustments. That is for the future.

The second is the real difficulty. In the assignment or allotment of work to groups, there are likely to arise jealousies and mutual quarrels A particular work may be really hard, and dirty to do, while the other work is light or clean. So, who will volunteer to do the hard and dirty work? Everybody would naturally try to shirk it, or shove it on to the head of some other group, and himself ask for the light and clean work. Here is the door for the possible entry of jealousies, mutual suspicions and wranglings among men. It is really wonderful how our ancients managed throughout the long ages to get over this difficulty and run the society successfully in a well planned manner. But for the strong and impregnable spirit of mutual co-operation and co-ordination that was existing amongst these ancient groups of men, and the inherent herd-instinct which we alluded to in the beginning of this study and which refused to be broken by any amount of incitement caused by these artificial jealousies, this miracle would not have been possible. Further, this instinct of herd-preservation was further strengthened by the constant preaching that all 'vrittis', duties or works, assigned to the various groups, are all of equal dignity and utility for the common welfare of the society. A work though hard or dirty was indispensible for the society, and it could not be neglected by anybody. If everybody refused to do it, what is to become of the Society? The society as a whole will suffer including the man who, out of false sense or foolishness, refused to do it. Therefore in the welfare of the society, as a whole, lies the welfare of the individual. In serving the society, though in a difficult and hard position, the individual is serving himself and attaining his salvation, both here and hereafter.

By presenting the problem in such a high plane, men were pursuaded to take up cheerfully, jobs which would have otherwise been abandoned, to the great detriment of the whole society. There is nothing strange or deceitful in it. Are not men and women being pursuaded to court cheerfully imprisonment, lathi charges and other privations by the gentle preaching of high patriotism and other moral virtues? Can all these men and women be said, now, or at a future time, to have been forced or compelled against their will to go to jails or receive lathi charges? It cannot therefore be said that the ancestors of the various groups of men who had taken up hard or dirty jobs, had done so at some remote time of our history, only at the point of bayonet. If this plan of our society had been really forced upon our ancients by some interested or wicked group of persons, surely, it would not have survived so long.

Further, notions of high or low professions were of later origin. Originally, when the society was first planned, there was not this notion at all. As all the professions or works were essential for the preservation of the herd, it would have been foolish on the part of the leader, whoever he might have been, to dub the one as low and the other as high or for the members to have entertained such silly and dangerous notions. The very fact that the various groups took up the jobs allotted to them not only cheerfully so long ago without murmuring, but on the other hand with pride is proof positive that in those remote times, these notions of high and low, were never even thought of at least for a very very long time. These false notions are of later and recent growth, and no wonder they have begun to disturb the plan and disrupt the society. More of it later on.

## MEANING OF NUMBERS.

It may be further noted that in telling off gangs of people to the various works, care was taken to see that only such number of persons were told off to a particular work as would be enough to carry it out efficiently and in time—and none more or none less. In a society of say 100 people, it is enough if two or three people are told off to do teaching of alphabet and other

such work. More would be a waste. Similarly, one man would be enough to manufacture jewels etc. Three or four people would suffice for the work of weaving clothes for all the 100 men and women. But the work of producing paddy or wheat and other food stuffs would not be done by four or five people. The work would require say about 70 or 80 people. Hence it is that, on an examination of the census figures, we find that the number of people comprised in these various Castes—Brahmins, Goldsmiths, Weavers, Agriculturists, etc. — correspond to the percentages quoted above. An examination of these numbers would really lead to a revelation.

How is it that God created only three Brahmins out of every 100 human beings he created; and only one Goldsmith and 70 or 80 agriculturists and why not more or less? What is the meaning of these census figures? It means that these castes or the numbers of people comprised in them were really not the creation of God but were the creation of man himself, made as part and parcel of a very intelligent and well thought-out economic plan of society. The numbers were very well thought out and fixed to suit the purpose exactly. Telling more men would have been not only a wanton waste of human energy, but the work itself would have been spoiled—too many cooks would have spoiled the broth. Similarly, telling of less number of men would not have accomplished the task in time or in an efficient manner The efficiency of the plan lay in avoiding both these pitfalls and fixing the numbers exactly, correct to the exact need. Viewed thus, even merely from the standpoint of numbers fixed for the gangs intended to carry out the various works needed for the happy running of the society, our ancient Hindu system cannot but impress anybody as the best economic plan ever devised by human brain.

## WHY THESE PROHIBITIONS ?

Having stated that our society had been, not a mere heterogenous group of persons, but a very well-planned one, it goes without saying that it had all along been conducted as a most disciplined army in the field. But for this discipline, the Hindu society would not have lasted so long, so efficiently.

Discipline implies that every man must keep to his allotted place and do his duty faithfully and cheerfully, but not leave the post even under the most trying circumstances. We have the example here of brave boy Casabianca. Even death, as in the case of this hero, in the discharge of one's duty was considered welcome, (**Swadharme Nidhanam sreyaha**). But unfortunately we are taught in our English schools to applaud **Casabianca** and in the same breath deride this ancient dictum of ours, which is applicable in social as well as in other matters. On the other hand, fleeing from one's post saying that the work allotted to one was hard and dirty and trying to station oneself in a more comfortable place according to one's own whim or fancy will only result in utter indiscipline, confusion, and terrible destruction in the end. One trying to do some other one's duty was therefore considered to be a bad thing, entailing terrible consequences, (Paradharmo-bhayavahaha). We have the fable of an ass braying in the night in order to wake up the master, when the thief came, instead of the dog doing the barking; and as a consequence, the ass receiving severe lathi blows from the master, who thought that the ass was creating unnecessary uproar and disturbing his sleep. The supreme necessity for maintaining discipline and for running the society as a well-planned organisation was the motive for our ancestors prohibiting men in one station from abandoning their allotted places and trying to enter into places allotted to others. The motive was not, as is generally misunderstood, to perpetuate differences among people, nor to allow monopoly of high and comfortable places in a society to a particular group or groups of favoured persons. No such ideas of monopoly were ever thought of and no such notions of high or low stations ever entertained. When, say, Sudras were not permitted to study Vedas, it was not intended to confer a monopoly or such study of Vedas on Brahmins, even as it was not intended, when the Brahmins were prohibited from acquiring lands and other properties, to confer a monopoly of lands etc., upon Sudras. These prohibitions were not, — as often sought now-a-days to be made out — actuated by any narrow-mindedness or motives of jealousy on the part of the Brahmins. If Sudras were asked not to engage themselves in the study of Vedas, the Brahmins were equally prohibited from acquiring lands etc., and were asked

to embrace poverty and live by begging only. Where is the room here, in such an arrangement, for jealousy or partiality on the part of those who imposed these prohibitions either on the one or on the other group.

As we pointed out in the early part of this study, we see that if the colony of 100 people is to have food, about 70 or 80 people should be told off to raise food stuffs. If these 70 or 80 people, instead of attending to that business, bathe very early in the morning, sit down under a tree, catch the nose, do "japam", continue singing the Vedas till mid-day, then go about begging for food from door to door, eat, then again sit down for study or discourse of Vedas, Smritis, etc., till sunset, and repeat this kind of routine every day, what will become of the food? Who will raise it? How can even these very 70 or 80 people get a morsel of food, not to speak of others! Therefore, in the interest of these very men and the rest of the society, is it not necessary to ask these people not to engage themselves as a profession in such leisurely studies; but to go out, plough the fields and raise the crop. Call this by the name of prohibition or what you will, but it is an arrangement essentially required for the preservation of and providing of food to the whole society. This was purely a secular arrangement, and not intended to bar the gates of heaven to or acquisition of knowledge as such by Sudras.

This prohibition is against Sudra adopting studies of Vedas as a profession or "Virtti" and not against mere study of it in a spiritual or "paramarthic" sense. There is the glaring example of "dharmavyadha" - a butcher - told in Mahabharata. A proud Brahmin was directed to go to this butcher and learn knowledge from him. The Brahmin did so and he became a gnani.

The Sudra without taking the trouble of pouring over all these Vedas and intricate texts of other Sastras, and spending his whole life over it as a profession or special study gets the benefit of the whole of this knowledge — the quintescence of it — in easy puranakalakshepams in his own native tongue, in his leisure hours. Of course, similarly, the Brahmin gets the advantage of the physical toil of the Sudra. This is a mutual benefit arrangement. A Sudra gentleman who gets knowledge

from hearing of Puranas and Sastras etc., is no whit less in knowledge of Vedanta or culture than the so-called Brahmin As for literacy, even the Brahmin who can repeat by rote all Vedas is generally ignorant of any script. He cannot read and write. All his knowledge is got by hearing from the mouth of his father or guru. Hence it is that knowledge or culture was called in ancient days "Srutham" (hearing). An illiterate man is not necessarily an ignorant or uncultured man. It is false and interested propaganda to connect illiteracy with non-culture, and show up Indian masses as uncivilized or uncultured.

## COMPETITION OR CO-OPERATION

The idea that one man should not enter into the profession of some other man was further intended to avoid competition. Our society was based, not on competition, as was the case in Western societies; but on mutual co-operation. Co-operation was the key to our whole society plan. In this plan even the smallest and weakest group was protected from the invasion of the bigger or stronger groups. Take the case of the caste of Goldsmiths. They are a very very small group, I mean, in numbers, in our society. It was because other castes were prohibited from doing this jewellery business this small group of Goldsmiths had had their employment secured to them without disturbance throughout these ages. Their living wage was guaranteed to them and there was no worry at all in their minds at far as their food and clothing was concerned even though they were a very insignificant minority in the Hindu community. These notions of majorities and minorities are of very recent growths in India. They were an importation from the West, where the major group tried to swallow the minor group, by unhealthy competition. The small man and the weak man had no chance of living in the West. He must go to the wall in the competition with the big and strong man. There, the rule is "survival of the fittest. the weak must go to the wall." Here, in India, the rule is "Sarve janah sukhino bhavantu." However weak a man or a group is, he must live happily. The big man or the strong man has no right to enter into competition with him. He is prohibited from entering into such competition with the weak or the small man. But for this prohibition, the minor groups

in the Hindu fold would have lost their living wage long long ago as they have just now begun to crumble on account of the laxity in prohibition and the open competition allowed in the market. .t is thus that our village Goldsmiths and other artisans have lost their means of livelihood and are thrown into the tumultious open competition and are beaten down being a weak or small group of persons with no adequate resources comparable to the terrible resources of the competitor who entered into the field reserved for them long ago by our ancestors.

## NO MINORITIES PROBLEM.

Minorities had thus nothing to fear in those good old days. Now-a-days, minorities want to bulge themselves out into majorities; why? Because of the numerical strength of the 'vote.' Otherwise, as far as the food problem is concerned, they would like to be only in the minority, in the sense that they don't want any competition in their trade or calling. For example, a Goldsmith in a village would not like that another Goldsmith should come and open another shop by his side in the village; because the new comer would take away half of the food he was getting before! Here, in this respect, the Goldsmith would like to be only in a mimority and not in a majority of numbers. Majority is required only for purposes of votes; otherwise, for the real bread problem minority would be preferred! In one word, we may say, that these prohibitions were a feature which were very welcome - nay ardently desired for - by men engaged in the various professions in our society from time immemorial, and were never considered bad until very recently, when people began to misunderstand the motives and suspect the bonafides of our ancestors who imposed them and until the advent of "vote" amidst us.

The mischief now being wrought by these numbers - their manipulations in Census operations - their artificial inflation attempted by proselytising Christian and Mohammadan Missionaries by doubtful, deceitful and sometimes even violent means, and the claims sought to be made on the basis of these artificially bloated numbers - is a sad story by itself - all the result of our political subjection to a foreign, grabbing, unscrupulous power.

## RIGHTS OR DUTIES?

The present turmoil in our society seems to have arisen from the fact that, in imitation of the West, every man has begun to insist upon his rights, cleanly forgetting all about his duties. Rights and duties are but the two sides of a coin and one cannot exist without the other. Co-operation is the key note of a planned society whereas competition is the guiding factor in an un-planned society. It is the duties that are insisted upon in a planned society whereas it is the rights that people scramble for in an un-planned society. When you live in a planned society you cannot have absolute rights. Your right ends where the right of the other man begins. In the recognition of this truth alone lies the peace of the Society. If everybody is made to recognise the right of every otherbody — and not merely his own — the rights of all people are automatically secured. But if the idea of one's duty is pushed to the back-ground, and one is constantly reminded of one's own rights, you will be letting loose the gates for mutual competition and strife. Mr. H. G. Wells and other eminent philosophers in the West started at the beginning of the 2nd world war a discussion on the "Right of Man" with a view to find a solution for establishing peace in the world. They began exactly at the wrong end. They ought to have started a discussion based on the idea of "Duties of Men" which alone could lead to peace. Even in the days of French Revolution, people in the West were thinking only of "Rights of Men." They were clamouring for the declaration of "Rights of Man." Of course, there were good reasons for such a cry in the West. Because, as stated already, there was no well-thought-out plan in the West which could secure or guarantee every man his own food and raiment. Every man was left to find his own resources, if he could, or go to the wall, if he could not. Hence the competition in which every men tried to insist upon his own right by elbowing out the other man with his might if he could. Moreover, people had no rights of their own as against the King, who was an absolute monarch. The King was considered a "Swayambhu" (unlike in India) from whom alone people could derive any right or privilege. The King was the Lord and Proprietor of the soil and the people could only have lands under him at his pleasure under various kinds

of tenures. The people had therefore to wrest their rights from the unwilling hands of the King. Hence the need to insist upon "rights".

There was no such need in India, - because the rights of the people are there readily and naturally secured to them. The King never claimed any rights except those allowed by the people. The King was not the Lord or Proprietor of the soil. He was not the Law-maker. The Courts were not King's Courts. They were peoples' courts (Panchayats). The law was given by "Dharmagna Parishats" '(assemblies of knowers of Dharma'). The soil and sovereignity rested always with the people. There was therefore no need here for a struggle with the King and for a declaration of "Rights of Man." Even amongst the people themselves, the excellent plan by which the society was organised secured and guaranteed every man — however weak or small—his living wage without any sort of molestation from any quarter. The only need was to teach and remind people that they should not disturb other men's peace by going into competition with them, but to mind their own business in their own spheres. When everybody thus does his duty from his own appointed station the society is bound to run peacefully and most efficiently. Men here were taught not that they had such and such rights and that they must fight for them, but on the other hand, were taught that they were born with certain "Rinams" or duties - duties towards father, mother, and devas etc. (Matri-rinam. Pitri-rinam. Deva rinam etc.)

## BALANCING OF FORCES.

One other peculiar feature of our social plan we may notice here. Riches (lands, gold, etc.) bodily strength, and intellectual capacity, (dhanam. balam, vidya etc.) were recognised as different kinds of forces, and allotted separately to separate groups of persons, but not allowed all to be concentrated in any one single group. The Brahmin was allowed to retain the intellectual force (vidya) but not the other two; the Kshatriya was allotted the bodily strength 'balam' alone and not allowed to retain any property of his own. The land in the realm was not his own. To the Vysya and the Sudra were given the riches and the lands but not the 'vidya' as such,

as a mundane profession. This plan of distributing the forces was, I think, intended to maintain the balance of power so to say. If, instead of separating and arranging these forces in separate and appropriate places or corners, all the forces are allowed to concentrate in one place only, the balance of the society will be disturbed and the whole structure will tumble down in a crash. If in addition to the intellect of the Brahmin he is allowed to retain the earthly possession also his pride would rise and nobody would be able to resist him and he would soon become a menace to the society. That was why he was not allowed to have any earthly possessions, but was asked to embrace poverty and live by begging from door to door every day. This discipline would humble his pride and keep him to his proper place. Otherwise, he would over-step his limits and beat down others. Similarly, the Suddra was allotted the lands and riches alone and denied the intellectual vigour. If, in addition to lands and riches, he was allowed all the education and other intellectual pursuits, nobody could beat him in competition in which every other man must go to the wall. The motto of 'one thing at a time' seems to have been observed here. It is a good socialistic principle where people are not allowed to monopolise all the things for themselves. There is a nice tradition among our people, that Lakshmi (Goddess of Wealth) and Saraswati (Goddess of Learning) are the co-wives of Vishnu, that they would always be quarelling with each other, and that the one will not stay in the place where the other stands. The idea is that the forces of Wealth and Learning should not be allowed to co-exist in one man, but that they must be balanced by allowing them to act at two different points in the society. If both are allowed to act at one and the same place simultaneously, the balance will tilt and the whole structure will tumble down. This seems to be a simple rule in mechanics.

## WHO ARE RAKSHASAS

If people are allowed to have all these forces concentrated in them only, as I have said, they will soon prove a menace to the World peace. Such were tha Rakshashas of our Puranas. 'Hiranya Kasyapas' (father of Bhakta Prahlada) prayed to God Brahma to give him all sorts of boons. He wanted that he should not be killed either by air, or by fire or by water or in

the sky or on the earth or on the sides neither in the night nor in the day-time nor by animals nor by serpents nor by men nor by any sort of weapon etc, etc. He wanted for himself all the powers to be concentrated in him so as to caunteract all kinds of forces imaginable and secure immunity from death. Brahma foolishly granted all these things and the result we all know. He proved a world-menace and in order to rid the world of this menace God himself had to come down in an avatar. If a man is allowed to have more than one power his head is more likely than not to turn giddy and in his pride he would go about beating down all people. In one word, he would become a rakshasa or a menace to the world peace. The White nations of the earth are an instance in point. They have appropriated for themselves all the riches in the World, all intellectuel equipment, all armaments of strength; and they have now become unconquerable for any otherbody - except perhaps for one among themselves, - like sunda and upasunda of our puranas, or for an avatar of God who would perhaps conquer them by the extraordinary forces of truth and non-violence. And perhaps that avatar has already come down amongst men and begun his work of restoring the peace of the world, may be in the form of Mahatma Gandhi! Who knows!!

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# CHAPTER II

## CAUSES THAT LED TO DISRUPT THE ORIGINAL PLAN

I have so far tried to explain how our ancients planned out our society on a very well-thoughtout, self-sufficient, economic basis, wherein every man or group of men was guaranteed his food and raiment without any molestation from any otherbody. This system worked well for a very long time, but gradually it began to give way under the stress of several forces which came into play from time to time. In this chapter I shall make an attempt to analyse and examine these several disruptive forces.

## NOTIONS OF HIGH AND LOW CASTES

We stated that when the society was originally organised and planned out, there was no idea of one work being high and the other low. People took to the works allotted to them in a cheerful and proud manner, conscious of the fact that they were all necessary for the well-being of the whole society and that by taking up these works they were not only helping others but helping themselves also. But passage of time wrought havoc, and people began to gradually grudge to do certain things which they were hitherto doing cheerfully and also to imagine that the works allotted to them were hard and dirty and that those who were responsible for this sort of planning, did injustice to them. They began to suspect their bonafides. Yet some others began to think that their work was a superior sort of one, and that because they were a superior kind of beings they were entrusted with such high positions in society. Thus, while some sections developed inferiority complex, some others assumed superiority complex. The next natural corollory was the rebellion of the former against the latter; and the result was confusion and commotion. This had proved the severest of the shocks which the plan of our ancients ever received. The emergence of these notions of high and low castes had taken away the very life of our social plan. We shall deal later on as to how to counteract this wrong notion. We shall now pass on to the next step.

## Quick-Motioned Conveyances.

The second factor which recently disturbed the ancient plan was the advent of the railways, telegrams, steamships, and other quick-motioned conveyances which opened the flood gates for the entry of all sorts of fancy and other articles into the villages from all the world markets unhampered. They changed our tastes and competed with articles produced in our society by our artisans. When our society was small and confined to our villages and when there were not these temptations of foreign articles our ancients were satisfied with things produced in our own villages. They ate whatever was grown on their fields or in their gardens, whether it be Cucumbers, or Maize, or Ragi, and were fully satisfied with them. But now, our mind and palate stretch out far beyond the seas into England or America and would hanker after eating "Reading Biscuits" or "Quaker Oats." In olden times, we were satisfied with the "Chappals" stitched by our "vettian"; but now we would want leather shoes from far off Germany or Japan. When foreign articles had thus changed our tastes, multiplied our wants beyond all limits and without any restraint whatsoever, our original plan could not keep pace with it.

## Centralised Systems

Foreign systems of centralised production and distribution and the monetary system adopted by Western countries, gave another rude shock to our original plan, and the change in our tastes fostered by these foreign articles of luxury greatly helped to intensify that shock.

## Loss of Political Independence

The loss of our political independence and the advent of the Western foreign rule just in the wake of mechanisation of the world, made us still more helpless to resist the impact of these centralised Western systems of production, distribution and currency. Left to ouselves; perhaps we would have been able to counteract these forces. But that was not to be and we easily fell a prey to these world forces.

The East India Company very well understood that the plan of our society—the village was the best economic plan—that

the Indian village was a republic—a little state in itself which "contributed more than any other cause to the preservation of the people of India through all revolutions and changes" and that "it was in a high degree conducive to their happiness and to the enjoyment of a great portion of freedom and Independence." They saw that, if they wanted to get a real hold on the people of India, they could not tolerate the existence of these states within their states but that they must break them and concentrate the whole power in their own hands at Calcutta They clearly saw that in India sovereignity rested—not in the Emperor sitting on the throne of Delhi—but in the people organised in autonomous village units scattered throughout India and that they comprised 80 to 90 percent of the whole population of India.

## Interference by Foreign Rulers

They felt they could not be real masters of India by simply defeating a Suraj-ud-daulah here, or a Peshwa there and occupying their 'Gadis' unless and until they broke down these little Village republics, wrested the real sovereignity from these decentralised units and centralised it in their own hands at their headquarters. Accordingly, they proceeded to interfere with this village autonomy and broke it to pieces in several ways, economically, industrially, politically and in every other manner. It was only then that we really lost our Independence.

## When did we really lose our Independence?

We did not really lose our independence when the old Mogal or the Maharatta ruling dynasties were overthrown but only when village republics were broken up. India experienced several changes of dynasties occupying the various thrones at Delhi, Poona, Murshadabad etc., but those changes did not effect the real sovereignity and independence of the 80 per cent of the people protected by the village republics which acted as shields (or 'Vajra Kavachams) against any interference by any ruling class or dynasty that might have been occupying the throne for the time-being. It was because of this security afforded by these village republics through centuries immemorial that people in India grew so very indifferent towards the changes of ruling dynasties so frequently taking place. They did not care—they could afford to be indifferent—as to who ruled at Delhi, whether

he be Rama or Ravana, because none of them — not even the most cruel king—ever thought of interfering with their village republics. Here is my authority for this statement. Please see the 5th Parliamentary Committee Report - 1812 - page 85, quoted by R. C. Dutt.

"Under this simple form of Municipal Government, the inhabitants of the country have lived from time immemorial . . . . . . . . The inhabitants give themselves no trouble about the breaking up and divisions of kingdoms; while the village remains entire, they care not to what power it is transferred or to what sovereign it devolves; its internal economy remains unchanged."

Again, Elphinstone in his "Report on the territories acquired from Peshwa" wrote in 1819 that:—

"The communities contain in miniature all the materials of a state within themselves, and are almost sufficient to protect their members if all other Governments are withdrawn."

Please hear what Sir Charles Metcalfe had said in his minute on the 7th November, 1830:—

"The village communities are little republics having nearly evervthing they want within themselves. They seem to last where nothing else lasts. Dynasty after dynasty tumbles down; revolution succeeds revolution; Hindu, Pathan, Mogul, Maharatta, Sikh, English are masters in turn; but the village communities remain the same."

Having seen that real India lived in these villages, the East India Company felt that it could not boast of conquering India unless and until tbey conquered these village republics. Hence their destruction in their hands. This was, I would venture to say, an act, of vandalism on the part of the East India Company which no other cruel sovereign in India in the past ever dared to do or thought of doing even in his wildest of dreams. What the breaking up of village units mean to the 80 per cent of the people of India, we shall presently see.

## Why did East India Company break the village units?

The East India Company broke down these village communities—not because they were useless things - but because they

were very good things from the point of view of the alround prosperity of the people comprised in these units. It may look a paradox but nevertheless true that this very goodness or this very strength and efficiency of these republics proved their ruin in the hands of an unscrupulous foreign power which behaved quite differently from the behaviour of all the previous rulers in India.

## How far Caste System was responsible for Loss of our Independence?

Now-a-days, it is commonly stated that our caste system was one of the main reasons for our loss of political independence. This statement will have to be accepted with a big qualification. If by " caste system " it is meant the entertaining of notions of high caste or low caste and the consequent internal struggle, mutual jealousies, suspicions, and disunity, the statement cannot be taken exception to. But as originally planned, nothing can be stated against its merits. I may here repeat that the plan was purely a secular one which guaranteed food and raiment to everyone in the society.

This immunity from starvation—this guarantee of food and raiment—engendered in our people a sense of indifference to the outside world events. That was the reason why " they cared not to what power their country was transferred" or who occupied the Delhi throne. The wars that were raging over their heads in Delhi or Murshidabad, were, for the people in the villages, not their own battles, but were battles between two rival ruling dynasties with whose fortunes they felt they had really no concern. If today they were paying certain imperial taxes to "A", from tomorrow they would be paying to "B". That was all for them. The defeat or success of a particular king made no difference in their (i. e. people's) own fortune. Why should, therefore, they interfere or take interest in these wars or successes or defeats of Kings or Nababs? When therefore Suraj-ud-daula was defeated by Clive and the latter was entering the city of Murshidabad, people in that city or in Bengal did not, for a moment, imagine that they were losing their Independence. They were simply seeing 'tamash' from the balconies while Clive's armies were passing

through the streets of Murshidabad. They had looked upon such scenes of changes of dynasties several times in the past with indifference, which indifference costed them nothing in the past; and naturally the future also held no prospect of fear or danger before their eyes.

Clive who was accustomed to popular commotions in England and other Western countries could not understand and was astonished at this sort of indifference on the part of Bengalis, while a foreigner like himself was entering their city with an army! He was in the beginning afraid to enter the city and so camped outside it and ventured to make a move only after ascertaining the temper of the citizens! He later gave expression to this astonishment of his, on the indifference of the citizens of Murshidabad, during the course of his evidence before a Parliamentary Committee!

The indifference of the people which in the past changes of dynasties costed them nothing, costed now, in the present change over to the English Dynasty, their very real independence, through the destruction of their village republics! How unlike was the present change, people could realise only too-late! They realised too late that they really lost their independence. It was not as if you lost your independence every time there was a change in the ruling dynasty at the centre. Similarly when Suraj was defeated and Clive (rather the East India Company) ascended the Gadi of Bengal, the Begalis did not feel as if they lost their independence. It was, say, only after a hundred years of the Company's misrule, during which time they broke up all our villages and their self-sufficient economic basis, that we realised that we, alas! lost our independence and that we must strive for it and that every man in the street must now bestir himself and not be indifferent as in the past. It was only then that the man in the street—the weaver, the carpenter, the smithy etc., etc. was brought into the picture of the srruggle for independence!

It was not the existence of caste system as such but the sense of security and immunity against hunger, unemployment and competition which this caste system fostered in people from times immemorial (which means the very merit of the system) that lulled people into indifference to the coming danger! Their long past experience did not justify any fear or even suspicion

for the future. But alas! the future belied their whole past! We may be wise after the event. But we cannot rightly blame people for acting in a way which was quite warranted by the long past course of events. Of course, now that we have grown wiser and sadder we may revise our opinions and be more vigilant. That is for the future planning. Alas! if by more passage of time, 'good' becomes 'bad', what can we do? There is no use of our now blaming our forefathers in the light of our new wisdom which recently dawned upon us and which our forefathers had no reason or occasion to dream of even!

## Foreign Government's policy of Divide and rule.

The Government, being a foreign one, is interested in keeping us divided. It had rightly taken advantage of the existence of the various composite parts which went into the making up of the plan of our society and misinterpreted them saying that they were the result of the evil machinations of a wicked set of people. The prohibitions which we alluded to before were misinterpreted as 'denials of rights' to certain sections of the society! People were easily taken in by these false interpretations which presented the caste system as something sinful and monstrous! Looked at purely as an economic plan of society, it is difficult to condemn it. Should we stick on to it as it was in the past or change it as we like is a question for us all now to think out.

The teachings of false prophets - the English missionary, the English administrator, the English Businessman, - were thus among the factors which contributed to the breaking up of our plan.

## Economic motive of our Merchant-Kings

Apart from the political motive, the economic motive of the East India Company also was primarily responsible for the breaking up of the village unit which was self-sufficient in every way. Unless the Village Industries were destroyed, the East India Company could not hope to sell its goods here. "The British manufacturer," in the words of the historian H. E. Wilson, "employed the arm of political injustice to keep down and ultimately strangle a competitior with whom he could not have contended on equal terms."

## Laziness engendered by state of Plenty

The state of plenty that was guaranteed to people by this plan engendered in them a sort of laziness and lethargy. We have seen how fatal it proved in our dealings with the British. Even in their own trade, the artisans lacked initiative; they were not anxious to learn new methods, nor to copy methods from other parts in the same trade. A certain type of basket useful for the economic feeding of cattle is manufactured by 'Medars' out of bamboos in Ellore. When I showed this basket to a 'Medara' in Masulipatam and asked him to manufacture a similar one for me, he expressed his inability to do it. It was a simple matter and for a 'Medara' with initiative and enthusiasm to improve his trade it was really nothing. Why this lack of initiative? Because, I think, in the absence of competition he felt, he need not think of inventing or learning new methods. He was sure that nobody would encroach upon his sphere of activity and people who really want the thing would anyhow go to him! Why then should he care for new improvements? Or it may be that the Medara in Masulipatam thinks that he should not go in competition with the Ellore 'Medara' by trying to manufacture baskets of the Ellore type!! If that is really so, it must be considered to be an inborn sense of respect for the patents of others with which he thinks he should not infringe! Are not the modern 'patents' the same as the old 'Prohibitions' which some of us now choose to criticise as something bad.

Foreign competitors who entered the field with giant strides did not care to respect the patents of our artisans. They entered into unscrupulous competition with our people who were entirely strangers to any sort of competition at all. Our artisans therefore easily fell a prey before the onslaughts of the foreign giant competitors and there was then no authority political or social which could restrain the foreigner and protect our indigenous patents. This was again one of the causes that contributed to the collapse of our village plan.

Before I enter upon the third phase of the problem namely — how to reconstruct our villages hereafter - I shall briefly refer to some more recent causes which went to break up the unity of our village organisms.

## Introduction of the Ryotwari Revenue system.

The village was originally conceived as a single indivisible unit. The State was collecting its imperial taxes— not from individual ryots seperately—but from the village community itself as a whole. The State had no direct dealings with the ryots. This system of village settlements or "Mouza wari" settlement continued throughout the long past ages down to the British regime, when the East India Company for its own political and economic reasons, which we explained at length already dispensed with these village settlements and deliberately introduced Ryotwari system by which they entered into direct dealings with individual ryots to whom they issued separate pattas and collected revenue directly through their own village staff who were divorced from the authority of the village community. When the State thus refused to recognise the existence of the body corporate and treated the village as a mere collection of disjointed houses or individuals, it was bound to disrupt in no time.

## Assessment of heavy land tax.

Some of the Mahomedan Rulers began to impose, in their declining days, heavy taxes on lands; and those who could not pay left off the lands and the State was transferring them to men of their own choice without reference to the local village community which gradually languished by mere neglect. The Northern Circars in the Madras Presidency which were comparatively for a longer period under the sway of Nabobs suffered more on this account than the districts in the South where the village communities still persist, for example, in the Chingleput Districts.

## Abolition of 'Meras'

With the introduction of the ryotwari system, the village officers also (i. e., the Karanam, the headman, Nayak, Vettian etc., who from time immemorial formed part of the organised village republic) — ceased to be so and they were taken under the direct control of the centralised authority of the Revenue Collector stationed at the District Headquarters. The village officers could thus snap their fingers of the village community

which hitherto acted as their paymaster by remunerating them either in the shape of share of their produce or other emoluments generally known as "Meras." The British Government, after some time, abolished these "Meras" and the receiving of any such emoluments from the ryots by the village staff was made punishable. With this one stroke, the divorce of the organic relationship that was existing between the village staff and the village republic was complete.

## Grouping and re-grouping of villages

In order to facilitate the collection of revenue from individual ryots, the British Government took upon itself the authority to group together villages or to re-group them as they liked. The old corporation had thus got into confusion and went into disruption.

## Establishment of British Courts

Besides depriving the village republic of its powers of taxation and collection of revenue, the British Government took away from it, its long enjoyed powers of judicial administration also. The Village Panchayats which were extolled by all thoughtful administrators as the best in the world in the matter of despensing cheap and quick justice between man and man, were set at nought, and in their place, the British Government established centralised courts of law (both Civil and Criminal) far away from the village environs, where a system of law foreign to the very genius of the people began to be administered at a very heavy and prohibitive cost to the litigants by hopelessly ignorant and sleepy sort of judges. The "laws delays" have become so very notorious that we need not deal with that aspect here at length. The Royal Commission on decentralisation condemned this system and we quote below the relevant passage extracted from page 22 of part I of Prakasam Committee Report on the Madras Estates Land Act:—

"The Indian villages formerly possessed a large degree of local autonomo since native dynasties . . . . . did not, as a rule, concern themselves with the individual cultivators, but regarded the village as a whole . . . . . as responsible for the payment

of the Government revenues and the maintenance of local order. This autonomy has now disappeared owing to the establishment of local civil and criminal courts, the present revenue and police organisation, increase of communications ...."

### The English Village and the Indian Village contrasted.

In concluding this part of my subject, I am tempted to quote a passage from Dr. Bishop Coldwell who brought out very clearly the contrast between the conception of an English village as compared to an Indian village. He says :—

" ....................The greater number of English towns and all English villages are mere collection of houses without any bond of connection or corporate life, without rules, without office bearers and without any organisation for the preservation or advancement of the common interests. In India, on the contrary, every village of any respectability is an incorporation. It has its council of headmen, its rights of jurisdiction, its revenues and its meetings for the transaction of its public business .... the organisation is so ancient and firmly established that it may be regarded as the most permanent institution in India. . . . . ".

## CHAPTER III

### The future

We have tried in the last two chapters to understand how our ancients planned our villages as units of our society, as also why and how that plan was disturbed and how we are to-day made to face this gigantic problem of reconstructing our villages, which is the same thing as establishing our real independence.

### Can we neglect villages?

We cannot afford to neglect villages because eighty to ninety per cent of our population live in villages and only a small fraction of 10 to 20 per cent live in towns and cities. Village is the seat where most of the necessaries of life - things necessary for food and raimant - are grown. It is the place where new wealth in the shape of crops of all types is added annually and where men live in closer proximity to nature than cities. Villages are the natural nerve centres of our society which circulate life blood properly to all parts of the body whereas towns and cities are like tumours which obstruct free circulation of blood and cause stagnation disease and death. Towns are like parasites which thrive by sucking the life blood of the villages through so many mouths, e. g., through lawyers, doctors, commission agents etc. etc.

### Village - Political unit of administration

Politically viewed, we cannot boast of winning back our freedom from the foreigner until we re-establish the village autonomy or the village republic which we have described at length in the two previous chapters. It is no use establishing provincial autonomy and trying to administer the departments through a cabinet of ten or eleven ministers sitting at the Provincial Capital. That autonomy must be decentralised and it must filter down into the hands of the villagers who should be made to balance their own village as well as domestic budgets and administer, as in the olden days, the revenue, civil, criminal

and all other departments through their own elected cabinets—the Provincial Government or the higher unit of administration looking after only the general supervision and co-ordination. The seat of sovereignty must rest not in London, not in Delhi, nor even Madras or Bombay, but in the villages. The present state of things may be likened unto a diseased state of too much of blood pressure in the head caused by pumping up all blood from all other limbs into the head, thus starving and paralising all other limbs. The head must be relieved of this congestion and the blood must be made to freely run and circulate into the minutest part of the body. Then alone the body politic can be healthy and evenly full-blooded. Hence the need for the reconstruction of our villages as republics with powers and functions in all matters of production and distribution of food-stuffs, clothing and every other necessity of life,—in collection and expenditure of revenues (i e., common pools)—in maintaining local peace and order, in administering civil and criminal justice through proper Village Panchayats and in one word, in working out the full plan of economic and industrial regeneration of the country as a whole through handicrafts mostly on a self-sufficiency basis and through the medium of barter.

## Some general considerations.

Before we enter upon a detailed study of the scheme for the re-establishment of these village republics amidst us, we shall briefly refer here to certain general considerations which bear upon the subject.

## Dignity of labour to be demonstrated.

While planning the society on a co-operative basis and organising its various constituent parts into a synthetic whole, it was said that there was never present any idea of one group or one work being higher or more honorable than the other. There was no grudge, no jealousy. But gradually we have seen how jealousies crept in and people began to suspect the bonafides of those who were supposed to be the originators of this scheme. Now, in the re-construction process, it is necessary that this suspicion should be allayed and faith restored. It is necessary

to demonstrate the dignity of labour - that labour is not a mean thing and that it was never intended to be so by the originators of our social plan.

## Mahatmaji's Example.

It was for this purpose that Mahatma Gandhi, when he organised the Satyagraha Ashram, insisted that all members of the Ashram must do the scavenging work themselves irrespective of the castes to which they belonged. It was considered the highest service to society ; and the dignity of it was thus practically demonstrated and now we see that genuine social workers have ceased to look upon scavenging work as mean or dirty and they are taking to it with pride and cheer ! If, really brahmins are anxious to prove their bonafides regarding their impartiality and altruistic spirit with which they claim they had discharged their responslbility in organising the society as they did in ancient days, it is now up to them to take up this scavenging business themselves without hesitation. It is only then that they can stand acquitted at the bar of world opinion.

## Real Sudra Dharma, Mahatmaji's Example.

People have somehow come to think that Brahmin is a superior being, even by birth, and that Sudras are inferior beings. But, the following story told of Mahatma Gandhi will, we hope, dispel all such unfortunate mental complexes to which our people have unconsciously become victims. It seems that when Mahatmaji went to a certain place, he was presented with an address in which he was described and praised as a real Brahmin. In reply Mahatmaji expressed disappointment at such an expression of praise and told them that he would have been happier if he were described as a real 'Sudra' because, he felt that service to humanity is the real ideal of Sudra Dharma and he was pining for attaining that highest ideal of service. Here we see the ideal or the highest Sudra Dharma as something really beautiful and not as something mean or detestable as is commonly mistaken. Again Gandhiji, we are told, one prayed to God that if he (Gandhi) were to be born again he would like to be born nor as a Brahmin, nor as a Kshatria, nor a Vysya, nor a Sudra even, but as an "ati-sudra" i. e., something lower than a Sudra which

generally means an untouchable Panchama. Here again, we see not only Mahatmaji's intense feeling for the sufferings of the depressed classes which he would alleviate by personally experiencing separate janma, but also I think, his conception of the true Sudhra Dharma.

## First item on the Programme:

So, in the programme of reconstructing our society, I would put this ideal and its practice by one and all of the workers of rural reconstruction as the first item to be taken up. This, I believe, will create the proper atmosphere to work in, by dispelling clouds of suspicion against the old order.

This is only one aspect of the question. I have referred only to the one process of the Brahmin purging his pride, and "coming down" to take up scavenging and other works. This is not enough. There is the other process of allowing others to "come up" to this level i. e., to allow Sudras to study Vedas, to do Paurohitam, to wear "Yagnopavitham" if they like as some Kamma gentlemen in Andhra Des, do now, and to permit the untouchables to enter temples etc. From a spiritual standpoint, we have already stated, there was never any bar to such things.

## Should one be born a Brahmin before one attained Moksha?

Now here has it been said that one should be born a Brahmin or one should study Vedas before one attained Moksha or spiritual freedom. Roads to Moksha are laid direct from the respective castes or professions. One need not pass or "ascend" through the four castes in four separate births and then only pass via the Brahmin birth to Moksha. So much for the spiritual side.

## What about these secular Prohibitions?

But from the purely secular point of view of economic planning, perhaps these prohibitions were necessary. If, with the present day mentality of our people, they think that these prohibitions even as secular arrangements designed to eliminate competition, are bad, I, for one, am prepared to scrap these

prohibitions and allow all people unbridled freedom to do all sorts of things as suits their taste, or opportunity, and take the risk, if any. But I would only warn against cut throat competition, wherein the weak may have to go to the wall, being elbowed out by the strong. With this understanding let us proceed.

## Communal ownership of Property and Non-possession.

Another fundamental consideration, I shall discuss here. It is this. We must re-establish the anicient ideal of "communal ownership of property" in the village and abolish private property.

Private property is nothing but stealing or "steya". Giving it up is "astheya", or "Aparigraha". Communal ownership of property was termed in our ancient scriptures as "Samudaya Swasthya". As already stated, this idea of communal ownership (or Communism) is nothing new but the very fundamental basis on which our villages were originally planned and nobody need therefore be alarmed at it now nor think that it is a modern importation from Russia. If only we can now stand wedded to this principle all else will follow as day follows night. It would be very easy then to re-constitute the village committee and clothe it with all functions and powers of a full-fledged republican state controlling and conducting all departments—executive, judicial, revenue, etc. because in this plan of 'non-possession,' there would be no "vested interests", no rich man and no poor man. None except 'dharmagnas' or people who really pine for public weal will try to get into these village committees or panchayats. It is "dharmagnas" that are qualified to legislate and not "swardhagnas." Memberships on these committees cease to be coveted places or places where people think of grinding their own axes. The unseemly conflict, competition and mutual jealousy that we often see now-a-days in the village panchayat elections will no longer have a place. Men who enter these committees will then look upon these memberships—not as a place for enjoying power prestige and emoluments, but as places of grave responsibility and burden, thrust upon their shoulders, and they will then set to their work with the consciousness and trembling fear that if they go wrong either

consciously or unconsciously in the discharge of their duties they would go to hell. It is said that a king, however just and honest, is somehow bound to face hell in the end "Rajyante Narakam Dhruvam." This fear is held out to the king i. e., to all administrators just to keep them on their guard and ever vigilant against falling into acts of injustice or mal-administration. These memberships being places of such tremondous responsibilities, even angels should tremble to step into them. When "aparigraha" or "non-possession" rules our community in future our committees in the village will be rid of most of the present dross and get purified and efficient.

Even in the present, this ideal may be practised in a qualified form, i. e., by insisting that men seeking election either to executive or legislative bodies should first dispossess themselves of their properties and embrace the ideal of non-possession. This is what Jesus also told us: "Give up your all, take up the cross, and follow me." Then only they can legislate in an impartial and disinterested way. Then alone they can develop detachment or "Nir-mamathva" which is the first qualification of a ruler or a legislator. Our Rishis who gave us smritis and social codes were such men of "Aparigraha" and "Nir-mamatva."

Now, strangely our legislatures are constituted by bringing upon them men with varied and often conflicting vested interests, each pulling its own way and trying primarily to safeguard its own special interest, but not paying necessary heed to the interests of the other. A Zamindar and a ryot—a mill-owner and a cooly,—are brought on the committee. Their interests are mostly conflicting. Fortunately, in our future plan these distinctions automatically vanish and with them these conflicts also. Now a days when any proposal for legislation comes up, each tries to pull his own way, to safeguard his own interest. How then can these conflicting interests be really harmonized except by a person who has no special interest of his own to safeguard? Therefore, the responsibility of legislating for the common good of the society should not, in my opinion, be entrusted to persons having their own special interests to advance. Their special interest will create attachment or "mamatva," which will blind them to truth and justice—and this exactly is a disqualification for a legislator or an administrator.

I am constrained to expatiate upon this aspect of the problem because of the importance of the quality of the constitution of the village committee, vis a vis the qualifications of the members that should go to make up its personnel. It is upon the nature of the persons that sit upon these committees, that the success of the village republic primarily depends. When once we can perfect this personnel, nothing stands in the way of success. This perfection can be attained only when we insist even from now upon "non-possession" as the primary qualification for election to these bodies. Possession of any property either in the form of lands or buildings or bank balances or connection with any special interest should mercilessly be made a disqualification for any membership of any public body or assembly or for any minister's place in any cabinet. If men already possessing property desire to get into any of these places let them first give it up in favour of a public trust and have nothing to do with it thereafter. As for their living, they must depend upon public charity and confidence. This is "Uncha vritti" ఉంఛవృత్తి the ideal set for the Brahmin.

We have seen how rich and monied people, by sheer weight of their riches and money bags have demoralised the public life in the country by corrupting the voters and securing for themselves places in public bodies, assemblies, and cabinets and using or misusing these places of trust to further their own special or personal interests. This position is intolerable and the only remedy for this is this insistence on "non-possession" as the primary qualification for these candidates and there should be no exception to this general rule.

With such a committee and with such a communalised property, the solution of the problem is easily effected and the ideal village republic actually materialises.

## Principle of self-sufficiency.

The village activities must be so planned as to make it a self-sufficient unit in every respect—in the matter of food, clothing, dispensing of justice, rendering of medical aid to man and beast and a host of other things. In the mttter of production of crops and the manufacture of other articles of necessity, we must aim at the ideal of "little to sell, and little to buy". This is intended to avoid exploitation of others which, in modern

times, has been responsible for much of the misery in the world. In bringing the land within the village limits under the plough care should be taken to lay out a well-thought plan, having regard to the needs of men and cattle in the village limits. Before we think of grabbing the whole land for producing our own foodstufs, we must see that sufficient pasture land is left out for the minimum quota of cattle required for the village, both for agricultural and dairy purposes. The modern tendency of the villages has been to plough away the pasture land and raise thereon tobacco or ground nut or some other commercial crop. This should cease. If I were a cabinet minister, my first duty would be to introduce a Bill to compulsorily provide for every village sufficient area of pasture land, cost what it may to the State Exchequer. Where-ever necessary, I would compulsorily acquire land which is now under tobacco or groundnut or even paddy (as in the wet taluks of deltaic portions of the Presidency) and leave it out as pasture area, with proper rules and directions for regulating pasturing. I shall have the soils examined, and grow new kinds of grass (such as ginny grass etc.,) as suit the various soils in the various localities. I would thus provide for healthy dairy products for the consumption of the villagers, for good manure for fields, as also good draught and other cattle for helping in agricultural operations.

Having thus provided first for food for cattle by reserving sufficient "go-bhumi", - ('go' or cattle being prior in God's creation to man) I shall then think of raising food for man. Enough land must be set apart for all food crops to feed all villagers sufficiently. Now, I am afraid, this is not being done: Most of the land is being used for commercial crops, to be exported to other places or foreign countries and with the cash so got, villagers are again obliged to purchase food-stuffs in the market. There is so much of loss involved in these transactions of selling and buying. This should cease. A ryot who prudces for mills ceases to be a ryot and becomes one of the mill hands or coolies in the mills! Commercial crops should be banned - specially tobacco which is poison - until enough food crops are grown in the village to feed all men. With this end in view a careful plan for raising of crops should be prepared and put into practice. The food crops that are produced should be no private property of any single individual or group of a few grabbing men. It must be distributed among the families that go

to constitute the village and among the village staff. No grain should cross the border of the village until all men in the village are amply provided with enough stock to last till the next harvest.

Similarly with regard to clothing. Spinning must be universalised. Every family must spin enough yarn to clothe all its members throughout the year and get it woven into cloth by the village weaver. This is the ideal of "Swahasta Khadi". Cloth should cease to be a saleable commodity in the market.

All other industries also must be revivified in the villages and a scheme to this effect must be worked out by an expert committee, such as the one set up by the Government of the Central Provinces during the Congress regime. In regard to dispensing of justice, civil and criminal, the village must also be self-sufficient. Villagers must not be asked to go out of the village for settling their disputes. The ancient village Panchayats must be revived. When private property is abolished civil litigation also undergoes a radical change. When every man is guaranteed his food and raiment there will be no motive to steal. Now-a-days, poor people steal mostly because of stark want brought about by wrong planning of the society. A man who, for want of food, steals a bushel of wheat is jailed for 6 or 7 months; but a person who appropriates for himself hundreds of acres of land and other wealth, thus depriving all others, is not considered, according to the present Penal Code, a thief! But according to our ancient ideal, this is "Stheya" or stealing? In our reconstituted society or village, we want to bring into force, not the present Penal Code but our ancient Penal Code, which defines stealing or "steya" as described above and imposes on all the duty of observing "Astheya"—or non-stealing. Thus, under our new scheme, our present notions of crimes and criminal law stand thoroughly revised.

## Labour

Raising of food and other crops, weaving of cloth, manufacturing of other articles for household use and doing so many other works are obviously to be done by human labour. They cannot be done by waving some magic wand or by heaping of gold mohurs or pieces of paper called "currency notes." It is the muscle of the human hand helped by oxen or horses or some other beast, that drives

the plough and not the currency note? As Sir Daniel Hamilton has put it beautifully, it is the labour that is divine currency. The various works will therefore be distributed on a voluntary and co-operative basis amongst the population of the village and the whole unit works as one living organism, which our village once really was. The village committee will distribute the work amongst the villagers after close examination of the situation from time to time and there ought to be no difficulty in this.

## Barter system of Exchange.

When all the works of the village are thus carried on by human labour and men partake from a common stock, there will be little need for exchange of goods. Even the little that may be occasioned can be effected by means of Barter system and there will be no need for coin. This system has been admitted by all to be feasible in a small unit of society. Our villages in India, being on the average 840 people strong, there ought really to be no difficulty in adopting this system in our re-constituted village. When, according to our new plan, there will be 'little to buy and little to sell', when civil litigation ceases, when Criminal Laws change their aspect and when Revenue and other functions are decentralised and conducted in the village confines themselves, what will happen to the towns and cities? They will practically be depleted of their population. There will be no need for lawyers, doctors, commission agents and a host of government and other establishments. They will all make a round about-turn to their ancestral homes in their villages! I am sure, under this scheme, the present 20 per cent population of India that is now living in cities will dwindle to about 5 or 6% (i. e.) just enough to conduct and carry on certain centralised works. When thus cities are depleted and they cease to suck the life blood of the villagers, the need for coin will disappear mostly and everything will be carried on smoothly in the small village units by means of barter system of exchange. The present monetary system, from which so many ills flow,— will thus die a natural death when once we reorganise our village on the five principles just laid down which we summarise below:—(I) spirit of service or sudhra dharma, (II) communal ownership of property (Samudayaka swasthya) and non-possession, (III) Village self-sufficiency (IV) human labour adopted as devine currency, and (V) Barter system of exchange.

# CHAPTER IV

The Scheme proper.

The following is a scheme in broad outlines for the re-establishment of Village Republics in India. The subject is open for discussion.

This scheme is based, as stated in the previous chapter, on the following five fundamental principles viz., (l). Communal ownership of property (i. e.) Samudayaka Swasthya (or 'Communism' in modern terminalogy). It pre-supposes absence of private property (i. e.) non-possession or '(Astheya)' or '(Aparigraha).'

(2) Spirit of service.

(3) Self-sufficiency-village being taken as the unit of Society.

(4) Human Labour (sweat) recognised as divine currency in the words of Sir Daniel Hamilton.

(5) Barter system of exchange.

I. Communal Ownersip of Property and non-possession :—

Both movables and immovables.

Lands (a) Arable, forest, pasture, house sites, cattle stands, streets, and other public thoroughfares.

(b) Mines, hills, rivers, tanks, wells, houses, factories, trees and other fixtures.

All these are to be declared by a Statute of the Federal State to be Communal, or Samudayaka Swasthya and to belong to no particular individual in the village. The ownership of all these is to vest in the General Body or Commune or Samudaya of all permanent adult inhabitants in the Village.

N.B.—For purposes of large scale industries, the Provincial or the Federal Government may, with the express consent of the village commune, take over the control of Mines, Factories and such other big establishments.

## II. The General Body.—

All the permanent adult residents of the Village will be re-constituted into the General Body or Commune or Samudaya of the Village, which will be (in the word of Bishop Codwell already quoted in Chapter II above), an incorporation, with Common Seal, Common Name, with continuity and perpetuity. As stated above, it shall be the owner or proprietor of all movable and immovable properties within the environs of the Village.

## III. The Village Committee.

The General Body will elect, once in every five years by secret-ballot system, a Village Committee, of say five people from amongst themselves to transact business of the Village on its bahalf It is the 'Council of Head-men' spoken of by Bishop Coldwell. It will have several duties to perform and corresponding powers and rights to discharge those duties efficiently.

It shall have power to assign lands and other properties (both movable and immovable) to individuals or to Committees for specific purposes and to otherwise manage them in accordance with the provisions to be hereinafter enacted.

The members on the Committee shall have no special privileges for themselves and may be drawn from any group of persons living in the village without distinction of caste or profession that they may be following for the time being. The services of the members of the Committee shall be gratuitous. They shall attend to the work of the committees besides following their own specified profession allotted to them along with others.

## IV. Self Sufficiency. (a) Food stuffs.

At the beginning of every year, the Committee shall estimate the quantities of the various food stuffs required for all the population in the village on a liberal and sumptuous scale, both on vegetarian and non-vegetarian diet with reserves for bad and famine years, (choice of food being § entirely voluntary or guided by medical advice) and arrange for their production, as far as possible, within he precincts of the village on a plan to be unfolded hereinafter. If, on account of natura

defects in the soil or destruction of crops by floods or draught or other unforeseen circumstances, sufficient food crops are not grown within the village environs the Committee shall arrange by negotiation with other village committees or central stores for the supply of these defficiencies by exchange of other agricultural products available or manufactured commodities or services.

(b) Other Commodities.

Raw materials required for other commodities (besides food-stuffs) eg. Cotton required for cloth manufacture shall also be similarly estimated on a decent scale and their production arranged for on a well-thought-out plan in the village itself as far as possible, deficiencies being made up by exchange of goods through other village committees.

V. Plan of production. (Both raw materials and finished articles).

This is to be achieved through human labour and by instilling a spirit of mutual service and co-operation.

The committee shall draw up✣ lists of persons generally by calling up voluntary services from men and women in the village with adquate numbers on each list— according to the needs of the work in question and tell them off for the various works of production and to attend to other§ necessary functions. What the necessary functions are, is to be determined by the committee in accordance with the wishes of every man or woman in the village. Here an instancemay be quoted Re:— Worship in a common temple or performance of

§ Toddy, Arrack and other alcholic drinks and drugs are however prohibited, as a rule, and their use made punishable generally.

✣ The lists shall be generally of (1) Agriculturists. (2) Weavers (3) Washers. (4) Barbers (5) Carpenters and Smiths. (6) **Telis.** (7) **Panchangies**, temple worshippers and school masters etc. The list is not exhaustive but illustrative.

If more men than are required for a particular work apply for being admitted to a particular list, it shall be the duty of the committee to take in only the required number and reject others. Similarly if less than the required number apply the committee shall have power to fill

"sradhas" or other religious ceremonies— some people may declare that they do not want these services or that they will do them themselves in their own houses, while others (be it a small minority) would like to have these services provided for. The committee shall not brush aside the wishes of these small numbers but shall arrange for the performance of such functions through an establishment of the required number.

In drawing up these lists care should be taken to pay attention to the personal desire, natural aptitude, physical and mental capacity, previous experience etc. of the person selected for a particulur list. If the lists are arbitrarily drawn up without paying heed to the above considerations, efficiency, harmony and co-operation will suffer. Old and infirm men, men medically unfit to do any particular hard labour, and children below a particular age, are exempt from doing any work; and they will be given food, clothing etc., without work.

The lists of men of the various professions shall not be liable to be revised for a minimum period of five years, after which time the committee may at its discretion do so. The choice of profession is generally voluntary but in exceptional cases a person may be conscripted to do any specified work for a specific time which if necessary may be extended from time to time in the interests of the community. When once the choice is made by the person it shall not be changed for a fixed time except with the specific permission of the committee which shall not grant it except for special reasons.

All land within the village boundary shall be divided into arable and pastural land besides house sites, care being taken to

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up the deficiency by commandeering the services of other men also up to the required number. To avoid compulsion involved in Commandeering, the work or the profession concerned may be made more inviting by decreasing the hours of work or the total period of tenure suitably. Similarly to ward off the rush to seemingly soft or easy works, the hours of work as well as the total tenure may be made longer. If a particular work is too short in duration and too easy to perform the individual may be asked to do some other work in addition to it. The balancing of these works in respect of heaviness, easiness, long or short duration etc., is left to the Committee, who are expected to take a common sense view of affairs and try as far as possible not only to avoid compulsion but to see that initiative does not lag behind.

see that enough of pastural land is first left out compulsorily to feed all cattle in the village sumptuously.

All arable land shall be assigned among the persons put on the list of agriculturists in proportion to the number of members in the family and each person shall cultivate it to the best of advantage with crops to be prescribed by the committee in consultation with Taluq or District Committees, preference being given to food crops. As a rule, no other crop shall be permitted to be grown until the full food supply is reached to feed all population in the village. The cultivation may be of separate plots by separate families or by all families together of all the arable land on a collective co-operative basis. This is a matter of convenience or mutual agreement.

Every person on the list of agriculturits to whom a particular piece of land is assigned shall have the right in it only of cultivating it to the best of advantage but not to mortgage or sell it to others, — the proprietory right in the soil always resting in the village Commune only. The assignment shall ordinarily be for a period of five years after which time the committee shall have the power to re-assign it either to § the same person or to some other person.

In essigning land, consideration should be had to the good and bad qualities of the land and even distribution of these good and bad qualities of land shall be aimed at.

§ An agriculturist who is assigned a plot of land shall not ordinarily be PePrived of it except under the follwing circumstances.

(i) If an agriculturist through neglect, inability or laziness, fails to draw the maximum yield of crop from it.

(ii) If he relinquishes the land either voluntarily or under orders from the Committee.

(iii) If the number of members in his house-hold falls below a certain limit.

(iv) Or if it becomes necessary to provide for other families which have either newly come to settle, or which have grown in numbers.

(v) Or under any unforseen emergency. In exercising this power of taking back and re-assigning land in favour of others, the committee shall not act capriciously or arbitrarily.

## VI. Plan of Distribution.

Two methods of distribution may be thought of

Firstly every agriculturist shall, after contributing a certain percentage of what he has produced to the common store (or pool) of the village, retain the balance for himself for his own consumption and enjoyment or for exchange for other necessary commodities. He shall not export it out of the village except with the permission and through the agency of the committee. The committee shall not, as a rule, permit such exports except for special reasons to be recorded ; or

Secondly the whole produce may be handed over to the committee who shall give back to the agriculturist his due along with the shares due to others.

The common store of the village shall be in charge of the committee which shall utilise the same for the following among other objects.

1. Payment of the village contribution to the Provincial or Central Governments.

No separate or individual payments by villagers are allowed. The village, as a whole, is responsible through its committee for the payment of Provincial or Central revenues or contributions.

(2) Distribution to persons (besides agriculturists) on the several lists of professions — namely weavers, potters, washers, barbers, carpenters, "Telis", panchagis, etc., etc , commonly known as village establishment-who shall cater to the needs of all men in the village free of any other special fees from individuals. The distribution is to be made at harvest time.

The distribution shall be uniform and on the same scale as for agriculturists and other men, no distinction being made between one profession or the other—(either agricultural or non-agricultural).

(3) Maintenance of the aged, the infirm, etc., etc.

(4) Carrying out of common functions of the village which might have been left out unassigned.

(5) Accumulating of certain reserves for exchange with other village committees or for meeting unforeseen circumstances and bad years.

N. B.—When men proficient in any particular profession are wanting in the village, the committee shall have power to bring into the village from neighbouring villages such men and maintain them out of the common store as if they were part and parcel of the original village inhabitants.

## VII. Common Functions.

The committee shall have power in cases of emergencies and special occasions to commandeer the services of all men in the village — irrespective of the profession one may be attached to — for carrying out of certain important works of common interest.

## VIII. Families and homesteads.

Every person, not below the age of 21 years, shall be considered a householder or a family-man and shall be provided with a suitable homestead in the village "natham" of "Grama Kantam" in which he shall live with his wife and children (child being a person below 21 years of age.) §

All homesteads shall, as far as possible, be of equal accommodation for all families of average size-accommodation, however, varying with the number of permanent members comprised in the family. The internal, or external ordering is left largely to the individual taste of the occupant. They need not be stereotyped barracks. Vacant sites may be given to families, who may build houses thereon according to their own choice or aesthetic taste. The present uncommonly big houses or buildings, i. e., in excess of the needs of the present families, shall be vacated and the occupants moved, if necessary, to some smaller houses or portions in the same house. These big buildings may be used by the committee for common stores or for other common functions or be partitioned between a number of families.

§ When any person leaves the village permanently or for a prescribed minimum period - which he could do only with the permission of the committee the house will be taken charge of by the committee and assigned, at its discretion, to some other person in want of accommodation.

When a person leaves the village without the permission of the committee and not return within the specified minimum time he shall lose all privileges in that village. He shall, in short, lose his right of citizenship of the village.

Every occupant of the house shall make the necessary repairs etc., for his confortable inhabitation out of his own or co-operative labour and produce vegetables of his own choice in the backyard thereof, primarily for his own household consumption.

Every householder shall be provided by the committee with at least one she-buffalo or cow which he shall tend and maintain by his own or co-operative labour.

In the assignment of houses care shall be taken to group together men of common profession in one place or in separate streets, those of vegetarian diet being separated from those of non-vegetarian diet. No untouchability shall be observed outside one's home-stead, while inside one's homestead the householder is free to observe untouchability or impose any restrictions of his choice on the entry etc., of outsiders.

Segregation of harijans shall be done away with and they be allotted a separate street in the main village itself or be accommodated in the locality in which men who do similar jobs as these harijans do, do generally reside. This will help quick obliteration of distinctions. Flaying of dead animals and other obnoxious works shall not however be allowed within proximity of homesteads but shall be licensed to be done in a suitably far off place so as not to endanger the general health of the village or to expose ghastly sights.

## IX. Cooking and Spinning to be 'Swahasta'.

Every householder shall have the † cooking of food and spinning of yarn done entirely in his own homestead through members (Male or female) of his own family. The yarn so spun shall be got woven into cloth by the village weaver, free of any extra charge, the weaver being one of the village establishment

† No common kitchen for the whole village except for special or ceremonial occasions like ('Vana Santarpana.')

sharing the common store. House-holders are advised to grow cotton plants in their back yards, besides vegetables sufficient to produce enough cotton for their house-hold clothing every year.

The committee shall, as a rule, not permit import of cloth into the village from outside except special varieties from production centres of fine and special varieties. Raw cotton however may be brought in to make up deficiency of production within the village boundary.

## X. Pasture Land.

An estimate of the cattle--milch as well as draught—required by all the villagers shall be made every year or periodically by the committee and the necessary head of cattle supplied either by rearing in the village itself or by importing from outside. Pasture land required by all these cattle shall be reserved within the village precincts if possible or taken on lease from neighbouring village or forest.

Researches shall be conducted by the State to see what particular kind of grass can be grown on the village soil and suitable varieties shall be planted and grown within the village itself as far as possible. The committee shall issue permits to householders for cutting of grass required for their cattle-head. No animal shall be allowed to stray uncontrolled and spoil the common pasture.

## XI. Trees and Forests.

Trees standing on unassigned lands, canal or tank bunds, on other village commons and in the forests within the village environs shall be in charge of the village committee and it shall distribute according to the strict needs of individuals the timber to agriculturists for agricultural implements and to all householders for fuel etc., according to a plan. When an agriculturist after the prescribed period of five years chooses to change his profession he shall handover these agricultural implements to the village committee.

¶ For Purposes of strolling of cattle with a view to giving exercise to them, separate cattle-stands of wide area shall be provided. In Andhra Desa they are known as (**Manda Bayallu**).

## XII. Laws.

(a) Personal Laws :— Personal laws of Hindus, Mahammadans and others with regard to marriage, adoption, worship and other family customs shall be respected and admimistered accordingly. No alteration of these personal laws shall be made except by a specific majority — vote of members of that community sitting in the Central Legislature.

(b) Civil Laws :—All property having been communalised, the present civil law will automatically vanish. There can be no question of inheriting property — no question of maintenance of widows, etc., no individual right in houses or lands.

(c) Criminal Laws :—Motive for theft is largely minimised as every person is guaranteed food and raiment provided he does some work. Here and there, there may be cases of petty thefts and pilferings. We may therefore conceive of the following cases of crime besides others which we generally meet with in the present penal code.

‡ (i) Laziness or evasion of work: —This is the only serious crime that may prevail in the social order which we are going to establish under this scheme. The general tendency in the ordinary man is to sit idle, eat sumptuously and dominate over others. Now that we have guaranteed sumptuous food, the motive for idleness and evasion of work will be on the increase and it therefore requires to be taken serious notice of

‡ Besides laziness or desire to avoid work, it may be argued that there is in man a desire or greed to accumulate for the morrow, for the old age, and for his children. But the reply is that this greed or desire to accumulate is engendered at present by the fear that he may not have enough for the morrow, when he becomes either old or infirm and that his children may be left destitute. But in our scheme, we have provided for all these contingencies and no one need feel any anxiety either for his children or for his old age, because old and infirm men a d children will be provided enough without their doing any work. Besides laziness and greed, there is the third factor, namely craving or indulgence in excess of real necessity for its own sake, e. g., a man having a wife (a beautiful wife too) goes about in search of other women, why ? It is sheer indulgence, in excess of real necessity. Similarly we may conceive of a case of a man having enough to eat going about stealing other's goods or property. It is a morbid disease and requires proper treatment.

and checked by imposition of several punishments. An idle man shall be considered the greatest and worst criminal in this social order. It is therefore for the committee to think out methods of checking such idleness or evasion and also of methods of punishment in cases of intransigence.

The following sanctions are suggested for discussion:—

(a) **Corporal punishment.** This may be considered uncivilised and barbaric now, but it was in vogue in ancient days. Even now Corporal punishment is resorted to in jails in certain cases — e. g., whipping, Cross and bar fetters etc.

(b) **Segregating** the idler from Society by consigning him to work houses — where expert task-masters shall be appointed to teach and extract work from idlers.

(c) **Fining**:—Fining in kind — say so many seers of paddy, etc. But it may deprive the man of his food. But it may be justified on the ground that one who does not work, has no right to food.

N. B. – The above list is not exhaustive but illustrative. It may be modified or added to or substracted from during discussion.

2. Petty cases of § theft of grain and other articles from neighbours, houses or field, or yard or from the village common store.

3. Encroachments into lands or sites allotted to neighbours with a view to gain undue advantage.

All these cases shall be dealt with by a bench of judges, constituted for the time being by the choice of the contending parties. Suitable provision shall be made for appeals to higher benches.

§ Man is generally not satisfied by a provision merely of enough food and clothing for the time being. He has as already stated an innate desire to accumulate for the future. It is this desire to accumulate (for one reason or other) that drives a man to commit such thefts, pilferings, and acts of encroachments There is a proverb in Telugu which says that (మనిషికి కూడిన బలం; గొడ్డుకు తిన్న బలం) "Man feels strong by the knowledge of his having stored enough to eat for the future, whereas the animal (buffalo and the like) gets strength by what it actually eats now and here."

## XIII. Education.

(a) **Basic Education.** The village committee shall arrange for the basic education, up to a certain extent, of all children in the village through the establishment of one or more school masters who shall get a share out of the common store, no special fees being demanded of the parents. Establishment of libraries, Purana Kalakshepams and other intellectual pursuits also shall be arranged by the committee.

(b) Compulsory citizenship Course:—This course upto a certain extent, shall form part of the basic education for all classes of people whatever profession they may be following for the time being. The duty of defending the country is laid on the shoulders of every son and daughter of the soil and not merely upon a particular group of persons like the Kshatria caste of old nor upon the present day 'reserve armies.' To make every one fit to undertake this universal task a course of compulsory training called "Citizenship training" is made, part and parcel of every man's or woman's general and basic education and it consists of shooting horse-riding, swimming, drill, marching, driving of motorcars, aeroplanes, tanks etc.

(c) Physical Work:—(Agricultural or otherwise.) It shall form part of the education of all. Just as a basic education (development of the brain) is necessary for all, so also, a basic physical work to a certain minimum extent (development of hands and legs) is necessary for all. For example, working with the spade and the crowbar in the hot sun is the minimum prescribed.

## XIV. Worship and ceremonies.

These also shall be catered to such of the persons in the village as would express a desire for their performance through a speciail establishment of persons who shall share the common store.

## XV. Other amenities.

All other common amenities — such as washing of cloths, shaving, supply of pots, medicine and medical help, games, recreation, parks, entertainments etc , etc., shall be provided by

the committee through the various establishments sharing the common store - without any extra charges from individuals.

## XVI. Towns and Centralised establishments and Governments

There shall be constituted a Federal Government for the whole of India and Provincial Governments on linguistic basis with centralised establishments and centralised finance (to be contributed in kind from villages) with full residuary powers vested in the federal Government for purposes of centrolling and co-ordinating the activities of all villages and other establishments and committees. These central committees or Governments shall arrange through centralised or large scale industries (by machinery if neccssary) for the production of such of the commodities as do not lend themselves for production in the village as cottage industries. They shall also plan for the production and distribution of food stuffs and other commodities on an intelligent plan so that no village or part of the country should suffer either by glut or want of one commodity or the other. The Central or Provincial Governments shall have control of Forests, roads, canals, mines, railways, ships, Posts & Telegraphs and big factories and work them through their own centralised establishments. They shall maintain the required strength of army, naval and air force for the defence of the country and regulate commerce and transport between province and province and with foreign countries. They shall enact necessary Federal or Provincial laws and administer them primarily through village committees rising up in courts of appeals. They shall maintain central cultural institutions, e. g., Universities and Research academies.

These Central and Provincial Governments shall have power to draw men and material from the villages and towns to run their establishments in consultation with the village committees.

The establishments of these centralised institutions shall be maintained from out of the poolings of contributions made by village committees, on a scale not exceeding the maximum obtainable by a person working on the village establishment. Special and distinguished services may be honoured by empty titles and other social distinctions but not by giving anything which will put the "gifted" man or expert economically in a higher level than others. This is a concession to weakness. Strictly speaking, service is its own reward.

## XVII. Exchange.

As between villagers and between one village and another exchange shall be by means of barter. The Central Government shall have very limited power of minting coin or printing currency. All contributions from the village committee to the Provincial Government shall be in kind of the staple food crop of the locality. The salaries of the village establishment will, of course, be paid in kind in the village itself. The salaries of centralised establishment also viz , Taluk, District etc., may be paid by orders on taluk and district stores or pools. For the procurement of stray and small articles, a limited quantity of small coin may be minted and released through banks.

## XVIII. Public Conveyances.

May be arranged far by Central or Provincial Governments through railways, ships, aeroplanes, motors, etc. These may be used for holidying or pilgrimage or any other business by villagers and others who will be issued permits whenever necessary either by village committees or by higher committees.

## XIX. Status of Women.

Women too must do some work so that she may deserve to eat. What work woman is to be allotted is largely left to the sense of the community; but we may note that certain works are better suited, in their very nature, to women than to men.

Just as a village is taken as a unit of Society, so also a man and his wife should together form a unit of the family, and it is better in allotting works that the family is taken as a single inseparable unit and not the individual man or woman separately. Man and woman should co-operate in carrying out that particular work which is allotted to them in the general scheme of the running of the village.

Within the family, woman's special duty will be cooking nurşing of children --- the future citizens of the country -- keeping the house in order and the like. Common kitchen having been deprecated under this scheme, there must be somebody in every home to cook; and who can do it best except the woman?

Woman specially fitted to do better any other work need not be confined to the kitchen. There is no bar for women to take up any job they like. They can be commanders of armies, drivers of cars, aeroplanes and tanks, administrators of big provinces, good athletes, poets, etc., etc.

In regard to property qualifications, they stand on a par with men. Under this scheme, even men do not possess property, then, why talk of woman's property ?

In regard to their social status --- (Purdah system, marital relations, honour and respect to be shown to them in Society --- it is largely determined by the sense of the community which may be varying from time to time. Reformers and thinkers are free to bring about changes in the sense of the community from time to time. It is their job and not that of the State which simply goes by the prevailing sense of the community from time to time.

Women, of course, will be trained along with men in the general citizenship course spoken of under section XIII --- Education.

## CHAPTER V

### World Security Organisation.

We have so far dealt with the village organisation. Our picture will not be complete unless we link up the village with the higher units of human organisations. Villages, nor even countries, nor nations can afford to be isolated entities in these days of aeroplanes and radios. England has now become our back door house, so that the whole world is now a small compact village consisting of so many "houses." Unless we set this "World Village" in order there can be no peace or security for any country or for any smaller units of Village republics, that we may think of establishing in India, or for any other social unit of human beings, that people in other countries may think of setting up within their borders.

Peace is the negation of war. War can be negatived only by irradicating its root cause. The root cause of all wars is either the aggression of one country against the other, or the occupation (either of short or long duration) of one country by the other, or the appropriation by the greedy and the strong of all wealth, means of production, or opportunities for enjoyment to the exclusion of others who may, for the time being, find themselves, for some reason or other, to be relatively in a disadvantageous position.

The psychological factors that animate two cowherd women quarrelling over a dung-heap in a village street are quite identical with those that animate a Hitler and a Churchill—or a Stalin and a Tojo — who quarrelled and made wars over the oil and other wealths belonging to others. Only the latter quarrel is of a wider circumference and the consequences are of a more disastrous nature engulfing the whole humanity; and it is given a high sounding name Viz., — "World War." But, I repeat, it is of no higher level, psychologically than that of quarrel of, the village cowherd women just referred to. It is the greed in the human mind; it is the gabbing quality of one group to the exclusion of

others, it is the morbid **Tamasic Guna** that shoots up in men's minds that is responsible for all this human disaster. Primarily it therefore requires a psychological treatment. Without the Psychological change in men's minds, no world peace can be firmly secured by any other means, whatsoever. Even combinations of three or more big and strong powers cannot keep peace in the world, so long as these powers themselves remain aggressors—confirmed aggressors and oppressors—over weaker nations. Thieves must come to blows amongst themselves one day or other over their shares of the loot. Combinations of powers may change as in the shuffling of a pack of cards, and the "Victors of to-day" may find themselves one fine morning in the list of "War Criminals" of the "Victors of to-morrow." As a matter of fact to quote only one instance, we saw how "Victor" De-Gaulee of to-day was actually a "War Criminal" of "Victor Petain" of yesterday, and was sentenced to death. Who knows that "Victor Stalin" of to-day may not find himself to be a "War Criminal" of "Victor Truman" of to-morrow, or some "Victor Falseman" of the day after. Thus the vicious circle of "Victors" and the "War criminals" goes on endlessly until men give up their greed and quit from their ill-gotten possessions. It was not because that Hitler was more "criminal" by nature than Churchill that he waged war. If so, Roosewelt, who declared war over Germany must also be dubbed a criminal. The long list of British men from the forgerer Clive, purger Wellesly, agressor Dalhousie down to Churchill of to-day who began and continue till to-day agression over and occupation of India, must be doubled not merely criminals but hardened criminals, and perhaps by still worse names. This new phase in the world's history — namely the "Victor" calling the "vanquished" a "war-criminal" is a very very potentially dangerous and vicious one. It stirs up worst possible passions in human breasts never to end, and never seen or known before. It sets in motion a never ending stream of venom and vengeance. Perhaps the victors of to-day in their blindness are unable to see what hell they are letting lose in the world in which they themselves will find engulfed one day. Alas! they know not what they are doing Is this going to be the legacy of this war? No, it must be put a stop to. All the civilized world must protest against this new phase introduced by the victors of to-day.

But where is the civilized world to day? Who now can be said to be a civilized being or a civilized nation? It is the "victors" that call themselves civilized; the vanquished or the weak are dubbed by them, as uncivilized. But when the victors themselves act in this brutal and uncivilized manner, when they call this their very aggression itself as civilization what is to become of civilization? What is to be the fate of the world? This is a vicious knot; we must cut it somehow somewhere.

We must think afresh and see the real test of civilization itself. Civilization is not to be tested by the amount of brute force that a person or a nation can mobilise, nor by a clean daily shave of the chin, nor by a set of neatly ironed white suits. It is not as if the washer and the barber are the parents of civilization. The real test and definition of civilization must be revised and must be sought in the great principles of truth and non-violence of the heart. It is these qualities that determine the gentle-manness or the civilisation of a person or a nation. Applying this supreme test, the modern European nations must be termed uncivilized, inhuman, barbaric, and brutish. It is only the Indian National Congress, i. e., India that under the leadership of Mahatma Gandhi adopted these principles as its practical creed that can lay claim to civilization and humanity. It is therfore the only competent body that can raise its voice against this new institution of "War Criminals" and try to put a stop to it. It has the right, the power — nay, it is its duty — to enter this protest emphatically and give a lead to the world. Let the Congress do it.

So far for the psychological factor. Keeping this as the bed-rock, let us think of building a world organisation to avoid wars and secure peace for the world. It is the burning question of the day. The second world-war has just ended, and we must now concentrate our attention on "Peace Effort" as opposed to "war effort." A move was said to have been made in this direction by the three "victor powers" at San-Fransisco. Their plan was to disarm completely every other body except themselves — to drive away whom they choose to call "aggressor nation" from "occupied" lands — themselves at the same time continue to remain in lands which they themselves occupied either recently or long ago by their own acts of

aggression — by their own force, fraud and falsehoods — only here and there giving a new name — a face saving name — namely "trusteeship" to their own aggressive occupation. This is obviously camouflage pure and simple. The world cannot trust its safety or security in the hands of these deep and long rooted aggressors and oppressors of the world — the "hardened Criminals" of the world — (the British and American) chiefly of more than a half of its population — namely the black and the coloured nations of the earth. The past conduct of these nations — their atrocities against the negro and other coloured races—artrocities that show no signs of abatement even to-day, their present behaviour and even their declared future plans, cannot inspire confidence enough to entrust the safety of the globe in their hands. They cannot be allowed to constitute themselves into self-appointed "trustees" especially for the the coloured nations of the earth who had been oppressed all along. These 'oppressors' cannot constitute themselves into 'trustees' for the "oppressed." It is like a cat constituting itself a trustee for the milk cup. This, in essence is the plan of Fransisco; and it must therefore be scraped altogether and a new "World - Security Organisation be constituted on the broad outlines enunciated below.

1 All nations - including the present victors — must disarm themselves - not merely the vanquished in the present war.

2 All lands belonging to one nation but occupied by another nation either on one pretext or the other — either as "concessions" or "capitulations" or as purchases, or grants, or conquests or mandates etc., — either recently or since long time past — must be immediately vacated by the "aggressor" or the "trespasser" nation. This is the meaning of the August Resolution - the 'Quit India' resolution - of the Indian National Congress. It is the charter of freedom and peace for the whole world—especially for the oppressed of the earth.

3 All flags of one nation flying over the soils of another nation must be immediately and unconditionally withdrawn into their own native lands.

4 A "World Security Organisation" (W. S. O.) must be constituted with representatives of all nations in the world (not merely of the present victors, but including the present vanquished also). The representative on it shall be in proportion to the area and population of each nation. More human lives are to be protected and cared for, hence more representation for nations having more population. It shall decide generally all questions by a majority vote. Under no circumstances however shall it permit or tolerate any single nation or group of nations making war against another nation or group of nations. If war is at all to be declared and conducted against any agressor nation, it is the W. S. O. itself that will do it. No nation or group of nations can take the law into its own hands under any circumstances whatsoever - or any pretext whatsoever.

5 The W. S. O. shall for the purpose mentioned in para 4 above and for the purposes of peace and order among nations maintain adequate land, sea, and air force. The nations constituting the W. S. O. shall contribute to this force their quotas in men and materials in proportion to their areas and populations. These nations shall within their own borders maintain no other force, develop no other war potential. They may however maintain certain limited force enough only for their internal policing - the outer defences having been entrusted to this "Word Security Force".

6 The W. S. O. shall appoint a vigilance committee, (World Security Vigilance Committee) to see and constantly watch that no nation develops "war potential" or arms itself beyond the needs of its internal policing. This vigilance committee shall have powers to enter upon the soil of any Nation for purposes of inspection necessary for maintaining Vigilance—Smaller nations i. e., smaller in area and population - shall have weightage of representation on this Vigilance committee since it is primarily for their safety that this W. S. O. is set up at all.

7 No nation shall declare war or commit acts of aggression or trespass over another nation. Any cause or causes of dispute between one nation or the other shall be referred by the aggreived nation to the W. S. O. which shall settle the matter amicably. Its decision shall be final and binding upon the parties to the dispute, and they must abide by it implicitly. The recalcitrant party will however be punished by the W. S. O. with the help of its W. S. F. No party to dispute - no individual nation nor group of nations - shall take the law into its own hands and declare war or commit acts of aggression or trespass over another nation or group of nations. The parties to the dispute shall not vote on the issue of the dispute concerned.

8 Economic Plan. Each nation shall remain within its own borders and strive to be self-sufficient in matters of food, raiment and other needs of life up to a decent standard in conformity to its natural surroundings and climatic conditions and to this end produce the necessary articles within its own borders by the labour of its own nationals. Any deficiencies that may be occassioned by natural and incurable defects in its natural soil or by other **bonafide** reasons will, in the absence of any voluntary mutual agreements, be made up by exchange of goods from neighbouring countries. These exchanges and other acts of co-ordination and co-operation shall be arranged by the W. S. O. The voluntary agreements also, if any, shall be subject to review and if necessary revision by the W. S. O. to see that no elements of fraud or other dis-advantage to one party or the other or to the jeopardy of World Security as a whole had entered into these agreements, as also to see that no secret pacts or plots are hatched between nations under the ostensible cover of trade agreements with the criminal object of tarpadoing or sabotaging the world security.

Barter System.

9 The present world monetary system shall be abolished and barter system as between nations set up. Barter equivalents of goods shall be fixed by the W. S. O.

10 Communications. International communications by land, sea and air shall be under the control of W. S. O. which shall utilise them for transport of goods, for the travel of piligrims of religion, culture, holy places, pleasure and health resorts and the like. No nation shall have the right and the power to use these international communications for war and other aggressive purposes. If war is necessary at all against any aggressor nation the W. S. O. alone shall have the right and power to put these communications and other means of transport for that war purpose temporarily.

11 Exchange of services. Nations, of course, shall have the right to mutual exchange of experts in science, industry and other branches of knowledge at their free will and choice. Nations have got the inherent right to ask unwanted nationals of other countries if any squatting on their soils to quit those lands unconditionally.

12 National Affairs. The W. S. O. shall not interfere in the internal ordering of the national affairs of its constituent nations unless they directly or indirectly affect the World Security e. g. if any nation develops within its own borders, "War Potential" beyond its national needs of internal policing.

13 Minerals, Oils, and other Natural wealths of the world. These natural wealths of the world shall primarily belong to the nations within the borders of which these mines etc. are situated. But in exceptional cases i. e. where these are wanting in any nation to such an extent as to hinder its necessary growth, the nation that "has" them in **excess of its own requirements** shall by mutual agreement supply

the required article to the needy nation for exchange of some other article to be supplied by that needy nation. Failing such an agreement, the W. S. O. shall arbitrate and settle the bargain. Of course, as stated in para 8 above, these mutual agreements shall be subject to the review and revision by the W. S. O.

14 **War Materials.** Petrol, sulphur, acids and other chemicals and metals etc. which are likely to be used in the manufacture of war materials shall be under the strict control of the W. S. O. Manufacture of arms, tanks, bombs, etc., shall similarly be a matter for W. S. O. and no nation shall be allowed to manufacture these beyond the strict needs of local policing. Scientific researches conducted with a view to inventing or discovering of destructive means or materials shall be taboo to the individual nations and shall be conducted, if at all, only under the direct control of the W. S. O., with the strictest possible secrecy. No individual nation or group of nations shall be divulged the results of the secret scientific researches.

15 **Trusteeship** There can be no question of one nation or group of nations being a trustee for another nation. In fact no nation would really be in need of a trustee if and when this W. S. O. comes into existence and functions. In effect, the W. S. O. itself is the trustee for all small and less sophisticated nations in the world. Primarily it is to protect these "small" nations against the aggression of the more unscrupulous or "big" nations that this W. S. O. has become necessary at all. Not only that, it is to prevent even small nations i. e. small in size and population say small island countries like England - from bulging themselves into "big" nations by means of force, fraud and falsehoods—from trespassing into and occupying big but innocent and less sophisticated peoples' lands like India Africa, China, Phillipines etc., and from developing Imperialisms and proving menaces to world peace that this W. S. O. has become necessary at all.

16 **Overpopulation.** When any country is over populated and its nationals have no elbowing space to live in, the W. S. O. will help them to transfer themselves to less dense areas as permanent or temporary residents or nationals on the new soil, with the consent of those already residing in that area. They may also be transferred to vacant lands if any available on the globe. Forests or unoccupied tracts on the globe may be assigned by the W. S. O. for the colonisation of people of such over populated countries just to relieve congestion in these countries.